

Message Text

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SUBJECT: EDITORIAL IN THE IRISH TIMES, JULY 11, 1978

FOLLOWING EDITORIAL APPEARED IN THE IRISH TIMES, JULY 11, 1978 UNDER THE HEADING "THE HARD LINE".

THE TRIALS THAT OPENED IN THE SOVIET UNION YESTERDAY ARE ALMOST CERTAINLY THE KREMLIN'S WAY OF TELLING THE WEST, AND PRESIDENT CARTER IN PARTICULAR, TO KEEP ITS NOSE OUT OF SOVIET AFFAIRS, AND TO LAY OFF HUMAN RIGHTS.

IF THE PURPOSE WAS SIMPLY TO CLAMP DOWN ON INTERNAL OPPOSITION, THERE ARE SIMPLER MEANS AVAILABLE TO MOSCOW RANGING FROM THE DISAPPEARANCE OF A DISSIDENT, TO THE MORE HUMANE COURSE OF GIVING HIM A ONE-WAY TICKET OUT OF RUSSIA.

IN THESE PARTICULAR CASES, THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP HAS CHOSEN TO LEVY SERIOUS CHARGES, INCLUDING THE MOST SERIOUS OF ALL - TREASON - AGAINST ANATOLY SHCHARANSKY, AND HAS STAGED THE TRIALS IN A MANNER THAT SEEMS DELIBERATELY CALCULATED TO OUTRAGE WESTERN OPINION.

THE TRIALS ARE SUPPOSEDLY PUBLIC, BUT WESTERN JOURNALISTS AND DIPLOMATIC OBSERVERS ARE EXCLUDED, AS
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ARE ALSO, AT LEAST IN SOME CASES, RELATIVES OF THE ACCUSED. ALL THESE CASES INVOLVE MEMBERS OF HELSINKI MONITORING GROUPS, AND AS THE HELSINKI AGREEMENT NOW PROVIDES THE GENERAL FRAMEWORK FOR EAST-WEST RELATIONS AND FOR THE PURSUIT OF DETENTE, IT WAS INEVITABLE THAT ACTION AGAINST THESE PARTICULAR DISSIDENTS WOULD HAVE IMMEDIATE AND IMMENSE REVERBERATIONS ON THE EAST-WEST

RELATIONSHIP.

PRESIDENT CARTER'S HUMAN RIGHTS OFFENSIVE HAS HAD ITS CRITICS IN THE WEST. SOME MAY ARGUE THAT HAD HE BEEN MORE CIRCUMSPECT, THOSE NOW ON TRIAL IN THE SOVIET UNION, AND OTHERS LIKE DR. YURI ORLOV, WOULD HAVE BEEN DEALT WITH MUCH MORE QUIETLY AND LENIENTLY.

THERE MAY BE SOME TRUTH IN THAT, BUT IT IS A LINE OF ARGUING UNLIKELY TO APPEAL TO THE DISSIDENTS, FOR IT WOULD HAVE IMPLIED A CONTINUED SWEEPING UNDER THE CARPET OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE, IN THE HOPE THAT, AS EAST-WEST CONTACTS GREW, THINGS INSIDE THE SOVIET UNION WOULD GRADUALLY IMPROVE.

IT ALSO IGNORES THE STRENGTH OF PUBLIC IMPATIENCE IN THE WEST AT THE SLOW PROGRESS ON HUMAN RIGHTS WITHIN THE SOVIET BLOC, AN IMPATIENCE TO WHICH MR. CARTER WAS CLEARLY RESPONDING. THE MODEST REFERENCES TO HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE HELSINKI AGREEMENT WERE SEEN BY MANY AS THE MINIMUM PRICE THE WEST COULD ACCEPT FOR WHAT IT GAVE ON EUROPE'S BOUNDARIES AND ON ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION.

A BASIC PRINCIPLE OF DETENTE IS MUTUAL ACCEPTANCE OF DIFFERENT SOCIAL ORDERS IN THE WORLD, AND DIFFERENT ASSESSMENTS OF INDIVIDUAL FREEDOMS IN SOCIETY. BUT
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MR. BREZHNEV AND HIS COLLEAGUES SHOULD REALISE THAT ASSAULTS ON FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS, AS MUTUALLY AGREED IN THE UNITED NATIONS, AND AT HELSINKI, MADE DETENTE VERY DIFFICULT, IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE. KRENE

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